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Synopses of Important Articles.

The Rectified Traditional View of the Old Testament.* The traditional view of the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament, modified and rectified by modern research, may be stated as follows; (1) That the Book of Genesis was *compiled* by Moses,—in its earlier chapters from primeval documents which may have been brought by Abraham from Chaldæa, and in its later chapters (except parts of xxxvi.) from family records of a distinctly contemporaneous origin, which we may reasonably believe to have been preserved in the families of the successive patriarchs as the archives of their race. That these should have been accessible to the divinely appointed leader of the race, himself a man of known learning—that he should have arranged and illustrated them by contemporary notes, is a supposition so reasonable, that, no more than a supposition, it may be accepted at least as more plausible than any other which has yet been advanced. (2) That, of the four remaining Books of the Pentateuch, the first, the Book of Exodus, as the autobiographical character of large portions of it seems clearly to indicate, was *written* by Moses, or, at least, under his immediate direction and authority. That the Book of Leviticus, as containing the statutes and ordinances for the most part expressly stated to have been revealed to Moses, must, if not actually written by him, have been compiled—in part from the legislative revelation made directly to Moses, in part from contemporary records made by Moses, in obedience to God's command, in part from documentary annals including references to books that may have been compiled during the lengthened abode in the wilderness,—but all, as the tenor of the whole book, and its concluding verse seem distinctly to imply, under the authority and general oversight of Moses. . . . Finally, that the Book of Deuteronomy, containing as it does, not without notes of time and place, the addresses of the closing days of the inspired legislator (which we may regard as having been specially recorded and preserved by official writers), assumed its present form, as one passage seems in some degree to suggest, under the hand of Joshua. (3) That the Book of Joshua, which is rightly considered by all recent critics as standing in close connection with the Pentateuch, was similarly compiled by some contemporary writer or writers under the direction of Joshua—in part, as the narrative seems to imply, from communications personally made by Joshua, and, in part, from documents and records made at the time of official writers and recorders, of whose existence and employment, even in those early days, we find traces in the Pentateuch. (4) That the Book of Judges is a compilation, not improbably made by the prophet Samuel, from contemporary records, family memorials, and other existing materials, commencing with events recorded in Joshua, and extending, though not in perfect chronological order, over a period of about 400 years. (5) That the Books of Samuel and of Kings are compilations, consisting in part of the compositions of contemporary prophets, beginning with Samuel and with Nathan and Gad, and in part of

*By Rev. C. J. Ellicott, D. D., in the *Expository Times*, May, 1892.

selected materials from official records, sacred and secular, put together, and perhaps added to, by seers and prophetic writers, of whom Jeremiah was the last; and, as he well may have been, one of the principal contributors. (6) That the Books of Chronicles were a compilation, possibly, nay, even probably, by Ezra, made largely from the Books of Kings, or from the documents on which these books were based, but with abundant references and allusions to nearly all the earlier historical books, including the Pentateuch. (7) That the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were written by the writers whose names they bear, and contain, in part, extracts from official documents, and from contemporary records, and, in part, narratives of personal history. (8) That the prophetic writings are written by those whose names are, in every case, specified in their writings, and that they contain, in some instances, portions of contemporary history, but that the main element of their writings is distinctly predictive, and has reference to events that belong to what was future and posterior to the time when they were mentioned by the writer. (9) Lastly, that the historical books, as we now have them, bear plain and unmistakable marks of the work having passed through the hands, not only of the early compiler or compilers, but of later editors and revisers,—numerous notes, archaeological and explanatory, some obviously of an early, and some of a late date, being found in nearly all the books, but particularly the more ancient.

It is difficult to find a brief statement of the conservative position with regard to the Old Testament historical criticism, which arises from the fact that it is very difficult to make such a statement, and also because there are so many minor variations in opinion among conservatives. But the above formulation of this position by Dr. Ellicott will be found acceptable and useful in present discussion. It will be noticed what considerable changes have been wrought in the traditional view by the rectifying process which has been the result of current Biblical criticism. Such concessions by the most conservative are full of meaning, and suggest further modification to conform to the further findings of our progressive Christian scholars.

The Story of the Flood.* The Assyro-Babylonian account of the flood is in striking agreement with both versions of the Hebrew narrative. It resembles the Priestly account as regards the preparation and construction of the Ark, and the covenant sign of the rainbow; and the Jehovistic account as regards the seven days, the downpour of rain, the thrice-repeated sending of the birds, and the offering of the sacrifice. But there are points of difference equally striking, as regards the reason for the flood and the reason for its cessation, the Chaldean account being grossly polytheistic, while the Genesis narrative inculcates pure monotheism. The Assyro-Babylonian story was not borrowed from or expanded from the Hebrew story. Neither was the Hebrew story derived from the Assyro-Babylonians during the time of the Babylonian Captivity. They are independent traditions, derived from a primitive and pre-historic Semitic original, the ancestors of the Israelites having been of the same stock as were the founders of the great empires on the Euphrates. The differences in form between the two accounts reflect the influences of time and religious belief upon two nations working out their destinies separately. As to the historic character of the narrative, there has not been, since man appeared upon the earth, a universal and simultaneous inundation such as would cover the highest mountain peaks—it were a physical impossibility. The language used to describe the catastrophe is that of the ancient legend de-

* Article VII. of "The Early Narratives of Genesis," by Rev. Prof. H. E. Ryle, in *Expository Times*, July, 1892.